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SUBJECT: DEPARTURE OF LAST UZBEK REFUGEES; AMBASSADOR RECOGNIZES
ROMANIAN CONTRIBUTION AT CLOSING CEREMONY

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1. Ambassador Taubman visited Timisoara on Monday, July 31 to celebrate the conclusion of the successful placement of 439 Uzbek Refugees in the US, Canada, Britain, Australia, and various European countries. The United States took in 266 of the refugees who fled their native land after the massacre that occurred at a peaceful demonstration in Andijan, Uzbekistan in May 2005. The ambassador thanked the Government of Romania and the people of Timisoara for their hospitality and sensitivity to the plight of the refugees. The Ambassador noted that it was a sure sign of Romania's intentions to fulfill her role as a democratic society when she agreed to provide refuge for those fleeing political repression in their native land. After the remarks there was a brief question and answer period which was well attended and reported by the local and national press.

2. The Ambassador also acknowledged the considerable efforts of the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration, the Romanian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and the National Refugee Office in protecting and caring for the Uzbeks. In his remarks Ambassador Taubman singled out the efforts of Colonel Livius Bisca and his staff for assisting the Uzbeks to adjust to their new, temporary home until they could be placed in permanent settings. Colonel Bisca was extremely sensitive to the Uzbeks' special cultural issues and needs. His staff responded favorably when the Uzbeks asked to be allowed to prepare their own meals. The staff also set up a temporary mosque for religious services. The USG, in response to requests from the camp's children and teachers, procured more than a hundred Uzbek and Russian-language textbooks. In addition, the USG brought in American teachers who had served as Peace Corps volunteers in Uzbekistan to teach classes at the camp.

3. Also speaking at the closing ceremony, Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Secretary of State Anton Niculescu characterized the mission to relocate the refugees as an "eloquent example" of a joint effort undertaken by the international community to ensure protection for the refugees. UNHCR Representative Veerapong Vongvarotai thanked the Romanians for their generosity in receiving the Uzbeks. He added that it shows Romania to be a responsible member of the international community when human rights and people's lives are at stake. Mayor of Timisoara Gheorghe Ciuhandu expressed privately to the Ambassador his appreciation for the USG assistance in supplying material needs for the camp and for providing leadership in making the resettlement happen.

4. Comment: The departure of the last Uzbek refugees from the Timisoara facility brings to an end a highly successful joint endeavor among the USG, Romania, UNHCR, and other international partners. The closing commemoration in Timisoara received

wide-spread press play both in local and national media, highlighting the positive move by Romanian authorities to accept the refugees. Post has expressed appreciation to GOR interlocutors, underscoring that this was but one of many undertakings on which we have worked together successfully. The Romanian MFA and UNHCR have noted that the Timisoara facility -- constructed primarily with EU funds -- remains available for the temporary placement of further refugees as situations warrant and with agreement from the GOR. End Comment.

TAUBMAN